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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3871
INFO RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 1213
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RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1162
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1429
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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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DEPT FOR PRM, AF, LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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SUBJECT: CHAD: CONTINUED INDICATIONS OF INSECURITY IN

REFUGEE CAMPS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: PRM DAS Fitzgerald visited Sudanese refugee camps in Eastern Chad June 1-2. Recruitment appears to be taking place in Oure Cassoni and Mile camps, and armed elements are in extremely close proximity to the Oure Cassoni camp. Humanitarian workers continue to face the threat of vehicle theft, and there is little confidence that Chadian gendarme protection will be able to deter further attacks against humanitarian organizations. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On June 1 and June 2, PRM DAS William Fitzgerald visited the Oure Cassoni camps in Bahai and the Mile camp in Guereda to meet with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and partner organizations, local authorities, and refugees. DAS Fitzgerald was accompanied by UNHCR's external affairs officer and Embassy's E/C officer. Discussions focused on insecurity in the refugee camps and current humanitarian operations.

OURE CASSONI: RECRUITMENT, PRESENCE OF ARMED SUDANESE
ELEMENTS

¶3. (SBU) In the Oure Cassoni camp in Bahai, humanitarian workers told Fitzgerald on June 1 that while they have not witnessed recruitment first-hand, they have received accounts from refugees who asserted that their children were forcefully recruited to join JEM and SLA elements. Humanitarian workers noted the presence of armed Sudanese elements within the camp on May 31 who claimed that they were visiting relatives and receiving medical treatment. They pointed out that gendarmes did little to impede their movement within the camps. Humanitarian workers also told Fitzgerald that, according to Sudanese refugees, a group of approximately 500 Sudanese rebels were camping a few kilometers from the Oure Cassoni camp, across the Carrieri Lake in Sudan. According to the humanitarian agencies, the presence of armed elements close to the refugee camp was a troubling sign, as the camp would be affected by any violent interaction between the armed elements and any opposing forces.

¶4. (SBU) During a meeting with the Prefect of Bahai, Fitzgerald raised the concern among international partners

of the recruitment of refugees and presence of armed elements within the refugee camps. The Prefect assured him that GOC authorities were opposed to any level of recruitment, and would take all appropriate measures to discourage recruitment. The Prefect added that he spoke directly with refugee leaders, who stated that recruitment was not taking place in the camps. He also stated that he spoke directly to members of the armed Sudanese elements across the border near the Carrieri Lake, who told the Prefect that they would not engage in forced recruitment, and in no way harm humanitarian workers or refugees while in the refugee camps.

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GUEREDA: INSECURITY FOR HUMANITARIAN WORKERS
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15. (SBU) On June 2, UNHCR officers in Guereda reported on specific cases of recruitment in the Mile camp with Fitzgerald. In one case, humanitarian workers met a mother who complained that her son had been beaten and forcefully taken away by men who claimed to be members of the Sudanese rebel movement one week ago. However, as in the Oure Cassoni camp, they could not confirm these reports. During a meeting with the Prefect of Guereda on the same day, the Prefect noted his concern to Fitzgerald of reports of recruitment, and stated that he would work with humanitarian workers to ensure that recruitment would not take place in the refugee camps.

16. (SBU) Humanitarian workers reported further cases of vehicle thefts in Guereda. Prior to Fitzgerald's visit, armed, unidentified individuals in military fatigues stole a vehicle from the Chadian National Refugee Committee (CNAR) in Guereda, and one gendarme was killed in the firefight

that ensued between the perpetrators and GOC officials. UNHCR noted that Guereda and Iriba were becoming areas notorious for vehicle thefts, and of the 27 vehicles that had been stolen since October, a large number came from that area. They pointed out that as long as vehicle theft continued to be a problem, their operational capacity would be significantly hampered.

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LACK OF GENDARME CAPACITY, AND DIFFERENCES WITH GOC
AUTHORITIES
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17. (SBU) Humanitarian organizations in both Guereda and Iriba noted that gendarmes and local authorities were being cooperative and assisting the organizations with maintaining security in and around the camps. Local authorities kept direct communication links to UNHCR through radios and satellite phones, and were readily available for any specific security requests from the organization and its partners. However, humanitarian organizations maintained that the gendarmes still lacked the numbers and resources to effectively provide protection to the camps (currently, 23 gendarmes are posted in Bahai and 35 are posted for the camps in Guereda). The prefects of Bahai and Guereda, as well as their respective gendarme commanders, admitted that the gendarme units lacked the manpower and equipment to be fully effective.

18. (SBU) Humanitarian organizations stated that while local officials were supportive in assisting security efforts on the ground, Chadian authorities in N'Djamena did not appear as cooperative. UNHCR officials noted the fact that gendarmes that were supposed to be provided for camp security to reinforce the existing numbers had yet to be provided. At the same time, organizations told Fitzgerald in a town hall meeting on June 2 in Abeche that GOC custom officials were not permitting specific communication equipment, such as radios and satellite phones, to pass through customs at the N'Djamena airport. Without these means of communication to contact others in the event of an emergency, they noted, they would be unable to ensure safety

for humanitarian workers. The Prefect of Abeche, who was also present in the meeting, stated that he had spoken with GOC authorities, and they would try to ensure that future shipments of communications equipments would reach the humanitarian organizations in a prompt manner.

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COMMENT
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19. (SBU) Infiltration of armed elements into refugee camps, as well as a Sudanese rebel presence just outside the Oure Cassoni camp, makes the area highly insecure for the refugees as well as the humanitarian workers. While Chadian authorities have stated their commitment to preventing recruitment and ensuring the personal safety of humanitarian workers, they appear to lack the means to fulfill their objectives, and receive little support from authorities in N'Djamena.